

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

### CHAPTER XIV. A PEACE-MAKER.

JENIFER went in as Jack came rushing, boy-like, out of the sitting-room to meet her. He was glad, sorry, delighted, mortified, all at the same time. That his sister had come, was what he now told himself, he "knew she would do" all along. But he had not prophesied concerning the meeting between his sister and his wife, and, now that this meeting was imminent, he felt ignobly powerless to take possession of the situation, and make it subservient to his will.

"You dear old girl, you darling Jenny," he began nervously, grasping his sister's hands. "Here, Minnie, come and take my sister's cloak. I mean, ask Jenifer to take off her cloak, and—and we don't want much fire these spring evenings, do we, Jenny?"

He spoke eagerly and bustled about. He longed to get the first awkward collision between his wife and Jenifer over. Then Jenifer's tact would assert itself, and there would be no more jarring.

But Mrs. John Ray was disposed to stand upon her rights. That Jack's sister had been antagonistic to her from the first she knew. That Jack's sister had no power to either harm or aid her now she knew also. Accordingly she felt that it behoved her to show something like a haughty demeanour to Miss Ray, and, as her only conception of hauteur was rudeness, she said:

"As you've come, pray walk in and make yourself at home; I s'pose that a room that's warm enough for me, is warm enough for you."

Mrs. John Ray was dressed consistently and well, and her house was well-ordered

and comfortable. Evidently she held the housewife's power, and would make things pleasant in a way at home for Jack. All these truths Jenifer took in at a glance, and they made her not only tolerant, but conciliatory. Dirt and untidiness around him would have made Jack's hard lot harder still.

"I ran nearly all the way, and I'm quite warm, thank you, Minnie," Jenifer said, trying vigorously to speak in exactly the same tones she would have used in addressing Hubert's wife. But the task was a difficult one, and Mrs. Jack was sharp enough to see the difficulty of it.

"I'm not going to let her think she's doing me any kindness or favour," Mrs. Jack thought. And then, by way of asserting her sense of perfect equality, she said:

"So you're off to-morrow to try to make your fortune in London, we hear. Jack and I were saying just before you came in that we'd rather have heard you were going to get married down here to some one who'd keep you a good home, and give you all you wanted without your having to work for it."

"I didn't say all that, Jenny," Jack laughed. "Minnie did practically paint a picture of what she thought would be the best life for you, but I only ventured to remark that I thought you'd soon be as big a swell on the concert-boards as any of them."

"So I should be if I had an audience of Brother Jacks," Jenifer said affectionately.

"Well, I can only say, if you ever do come back into these parts, and none of your grand friends want to have you, you'll always find a welcome here, if we're good enough for you," Mrs. Jack put in aggressively.

"I think I can safely say that under any circumstances I should always prefer

being with my brother to being with strangers, Minnie."

"One wouldn't have thought it from your goings-on of late," Mrs. Jack said, tossing her handsome head. "As I say, if Jack had picked any one's pocket, or listed for a common soldier, he couldn't have been more slighted by his own than he have been lately. Not that I care; I don't want to be picked up by folks who think the earth not good enough for them to tread on. And as for Lady Impidence, her pride will have a fall before long."

"You needn't bully Jenifer, because Mrs. Hubert was rude to you the other day," Jack said in tones of vexation that went straight to his sister's heart.

"Minnie has the right to be angry," Jenifer said quietly. "Effie told me about her rudeness to you, and I told her what I thought of it. Don't suspect me of wishing to put you in a false position. Trust me to this extent at least. Never think I am going to try to hurt or annoy you in an underhand way, and believe that I am as friendly exactly as I seem to be."

"You'd have given your eyes to stop Jack from marrying me, though," Minnie went on with an uneasy sense that it behoved her to stand on the defensive.

"Not my eyes, but a good deal, I own, but that's past; you're Jack's wife, and my sister now, and I will never forget that you are both while you remember it."

"Ah, perhaps you wouldn't have spoken so fair as that if you hadn't had a come-down yourself," Mrs. Jack said sneeringly. "Now that you've got to go and work for your living, you begin to understand that a poor girl may have a heart, and feelings, and proper pride, just as well as her betters. But there! I don't want to make strife. Your pride has had a fall, and I'm sorry for you, and I'm sure I wish you well."

"Thank you, Minnie. Jack and you must come up and hear me the first time I sing in public."

"Father and mother have always set their faces against play-acting, and everything of that sort," Mrs. Jack said with her most insufferable assumption of being on the same level now with Jenifer; "if it hadn't been for that I might have been an actress over and over again; more than I can say have told me what a good one I should be, and what a fortune I should make; but I was never one of those bold pushing girls, who think they can do anything."

"Jenny dear, you're not going yet, are you?" Jack put in pleadingly.

The tone his wife was assuming towards his sister was nearly maddening him. Still, Jenifer's presence in his house was something bright in the midst of the shadows in which he had enveloped himself.

"I must, dear boy. Walk back with me. It's late, and we start early to-morrow," Jenifer said as she held her hand out to Jack's wife.

There was a momentary struggle with her own sensitiveness; then she conquered herself, bent forward, and kissed Minnie on the cheek.

"Take care Lady Impidence doesn't come and tell you she'll have your life for trespassing," Minnie said jeeringly to her husband.

But he turned a careless ear to her words—he had to do it often—and prepared to escort his sister home.

"I don't like her a bit the better for it, but I'm glad she's been and called me her sister, and kissed me," Mrs. Jack said to herself confidentially when Jenifer and Jack had gone. "It mayn't mean much, but it'll do to talk about, and mother won't go on nagging so much at me when she hears the family are coming round."

From which little soliloquy it may be inferred that Minnie's was not altogether a bed of uncrumpled rose-leaves, though she had married a gentleman, who was a handsome young fellow, and loved her into the bargain.

"Do you mean me to go quite home with you, Jenny?" Jack asked, as they shut the garden-gate behind them and turned into the Moor Royal grounds.

"I do. Perhaps we shall both be a little hurt and disappointed with the result of my experiment, for whatever happens to hurt and vex you will hurt and vex me too; but I think I'm right. Our mother is our mother; we are bound to be patient with her; we are bound to try and win her back to showing her love for you."

"I have forfeited that among other things for ever," he said bitterly.

"No, no, Jack. Our lives aren't meant to be smooth, I'm sure of that. Don't let us try to make them rougher by shutting our eyes, and stumbling against things instead of trying to avoid them. Be patient with our mother to-night. Think of what she has lost and is leaving. Remember that you have erred, and that she is justly offended with you. Bear your part of the

burden, and plead for the show of her love again—the love itself you have never lost.”

“It’s easy enough for you to speak, Jenny; but I feel such a black sheep. On my word, I’m trembling now at the idea of entering Moor Royal. Hubert will be so deuced civil and cool, and Effie will behave exactly as if I hadn’t a wife, and the servants will look at me as if I were in disgrace. I dread it. Honestly, I’d rather not face it.”

“And I’d rather not face it with you, but we must. You mustn’t let mother go away without giving you a farewell kiss and blessing. Jack, you were always a plucky boy; be a brave man now.”

So she half led, half drove him on.

She flung open the hall-door and sprang into the house fearlessly and rather noisily, for she felt that in action lay her best chance of keeping up herself and keeping others up. As Jack followed her, Hubert and Effie crossed towards the bottom of the staircase, carrying a few trifles that had been scattered about the different rooms, and that now had to be smuggled in any way into various portmanteaux and trunks.

“Jenifer, how sensational you are, careering about at this hour of the night in the woods and fields,” Effie said, coming to a pause. “How you’re blown about! Ah, Jack, how are you? Funny the house looks, doesn’t it? You should just see what a clearance we’ve made in the drawing-room and dining-room.”

“I don’t think I could bear to see it,” poor Jack muttered.

“Couldn’t you, really? Now, I feel quite delighted at having performed the tedious task of selection. Hugh and I are going to sell nearly all the old furniture. It’s old enough to be old-fashioned, and not old enough to be antique, so it’s to go, and if we ever come back to Moor Royal I shall be able to have decent things about me. You can have a bed here to-night, Jack, if you like to stay and see the last of us to-morrow.”

“Thank you. I must go home to my wife,” Jack said with a gulp and a ghastly effort.

“Oh, you must go back to the farmhouse, must you? Jenifer, I wish you’d take a last look round and see if any of my wedding-presents have been forgotten. Good-night and good-bye, Jack. Come, Hugh.”

“Good-bye, old fellow. I’m sorry for

all this, but can’t help it, you know,” Hubert murmured as his wife bounded upstairs and he obediently prepared to follow her.

“Never mind, I can bear it,” Jack said doggedly.

And then Jenifer touched his arm and whispered:

“Come to mother now,” and he followed her to the little sitting-room where old Mrs. Ray spent most of her time.

Jenifer’s unwonted absence this evening had perplexed her mother sadly. She did not conceive it possible that Jenifer could so derogate from her dignity, as to go down to the house of which the keeper’s daughter was now mistress. And yet to what other house could she have gone? In her heart she was yearning for tidings of her son Jack. But she would not ask for them. He had wounded her sorely. He had perilled the honour of his father’s house. His children, who would be Rays, would have the low intriguing blood of the Thurtles in their veins. Jack had indeed made her life a heavily shaded one!

But now Jack came in, looking sad enough, Heaven knows, to soften any human heart, let alone a mother’s, but manly enough withal to make any mother proud of him.

“My boy come back to me!” she cried.

And she rose and fell upon his neck, and, though she wept blinding tears, there was more peace in her heart than had been there for many a week.

To be quite honest, there was a great deal more awkwardness than serene peace and happiness in this reconciliation-scene for Jack. His mother began by taking him so entirely as her own once-lost and now happily-restored child, without any reference to a wife or any encumbering matter of that nature, that for a few bewildered moments he scarcely realised that he belonged to himself. Then he pulled himself together, as he phrased it to himself, and said, as he hugged her:

“Mother darling, you’re not angry with me any longer, are you? I’ve been an awful ass, I know, but I can bear anything if you will forgive me and be just the same as you have always been to me. Mother! mother!” and he clung about her as he had been in the habit of clinging all his life.

“Oh, Jack, Jack! it’s too late! You can’t give her up and come back to us,” the poor lady wept.

"Give her up! Mother, she's my wife, and I wouldn't give her up even for you," the young fellow said, standing more erect, and unintentionally making his mother prouder of him than ever.

Then he bent his head a little, and told his mother that if she despised his wife, she must despise him also.

"It is bitter!"

"Yes, mother, awfully bitter for you, I know, and bitter for me, too, to be cut off from you all; but what can I do now? Having done what I have, what can I do now?"

"Nothing more than you're doing now, Jack," his sister cried, coming forward with hope and gladness in every look and gesture. "My dear boy, you're doing your best now to be loyal to your wife and grateful to your mother, and I feel for you, Jack, and will struggle with you if a struggle——"

"Oh, Jenny, don't distress me by pledging yourself to any rash course," her mother cried.

And Effie came in at the moment, saying:

"What dissipated people you are! Hugh and I were looking forward to the house being undisturbed to-night, when we heard that you were holding high jinks, Mrs. Ray; so I thought I would come and see if there was any prospect of a speedy dissolution of the family parliament."

She stood in the doorway as she spoke, holding the door open at arm's-length, a bright figure, full of confidence, success, and self-satisfaction.

"I will not keep your house open a minute longer. Good-night, Jack, good-bye, my son," his mother said brokenly, but Jenifer drew her sister-in-law aside a little, saying:

"Jack is a son of the house, Effie; you are the mistress here now; make him feel that you know it."

"Oh, pray sleep here if you like, Jack," Effie said lazily. She had a good deal of the artist about her, and she was conceiving quite a pretty little "separation scene" as she stood there. But the others did not know this, and so they thought her entirely heartless.

It was impossible for either the mother or son to say anything further that might lead to a fuller understanding between them, now that Effie was presiding over the interview in her usual dictatorial way. She appeared to be perfectly good-tempered and entirely at her ease, but she made

them feel that they were selfishly keeping her up, when it would be for the good of her health that she should retire to rest. Her cool presence iced all Jack's melting endeavours to win his mother to award him a more perfect forgiveness, and that mother found herself nervously shrinking from the probability of hearing her eldest son's wife use words of biting scorn and contempt of the wife of the younger son. Jenifer was the only one of the trio who felt unabashed and unawed by Effie's presence.

"Jack and mother want to be alone for a few minutes, Effie; come down with me, will you?" she said, but Effie did not mean Jack to be reinstated if she could help it.

"I dislike these scenes and mysteries, and midnight meetings," she said angrily. "If I am mistress in my own house, I have the right to object to family intrigues going on in it."

"You shall never have to object to my presence in your house again," Jack cried.

Then he flung his arms round his mother for a moment, kissed Jenifer on the forehead, and went his way from among them, leaving his mother shattered by the force of her contending feelings, and Effie singing merrily on her way to her own room.

#### AN ITALIAN PRINCE ON HIS TRAVELS.

IN the second half of the seventeenth century His Serene Highness Ferdinand the Second was Grand Duke of Tuscany, a generous, liberal-minded man, with a cultivated taste for music and poetry. He was unfortunate, however, in his wife, Vittoria delle Rovere, Duchess of Urbino, a proud suspicious bigot, wholly influenced by the priests. He was not less unfortunate in his son Cosmo, in the fulness of time his successor, a weak sensual prince, a puppet in the hands of the Jesuits. Like his father, Cosmo made an unhappy match. He married, very much against her own wishes, Margaret Louisa, eldest daughter of Gaston, Duke of Orleans, a vivacious and accomplished princess, but equally averse from Spanish haughtiness and Italian gravity. She was, moreover, passionately in love with Prince Charles of Lorraine, who afterwards won great renown by defeating, in conjunction with John Sobieski, an Ottoman army under the very walls of Vienna.

Cosmo, it seems, was as deeply enamoured of his young and beautiful bride as anyone



could be who demanded much and yielded nothing, and whose cold unsympathetic temperament was calculated to repel rather than to attract the sprightly clever Frenchwoman, who was untroubled with a conscience, and madly in love with another man. In the hope of curing his son of his infatuation for his unworthy wife, and of averting violent scenes of domestic discord, the Grand Duke Ferdinand sent him off on a tour through Tyrol and down the Rhine to Amsterdam. The experiment having utterly failed, Cosmo was despatched on a longer journey through Spain, Portugal, England, and Holland. A detailed narrative of the illustrious traveller's journeyings, illustrated with numerous bad drawings, was prepared by Count Lorenzo Magalotti, afterwards Secretary to the Academy del Cimento, and a much respected correspondent of Lord Somers and Sir Isaac Newton, by the latter of whom he was designated "*Il Magazzino del buon Gusto*"—the Magazine of Good Taste.

It is only with Cosmo's wanderings in England during the year 1669, and with the narrator's comments on English society at that period, that we need trouble ourselves. It may, however, be remarked that if absence did not make his heart grow fonder, it failed to render him callous to the misconduct and perversity of his abominable wife.

In consequence of bad seamanship on the part of the captain and pilot, his highness found himself one day in St. George's Channel, and took advantage of the opportunity to land in Kinsale Harbour. He does not appear to have been favourably impressed with the architectural beauties of that town, and was evidently shocked that the Roman Catholics, who, to the number of two hundred families, were scattered over the surrounding territory, should be living miserably "in mud cabins, badly thatched with straw, sleeping on short mats, and subsisting chiefly on fish and cockles." Bread to them was an almost unknown luxury. They were treated as a conquered people, even as serfs, being compelled to surrender to their landlord three-fourths of the produce of their tiny farms, besides paying a guinea and a half a year for the rent of a cabin and a few square yards of land. They paid six shillings each towards the maintenance of a priest, who ministered to their spiritual wants clandestinely. Throughout the province of Munster provisions of all kinds, and particularly fish and game, were abundant and cheap,

with the exception of French wines. Money was so scarce that the currency mainly consisted of Spanish coin. The viceroy drew annually forty thousand pounds from the Government, his appointment being the most valuable "in the gift of the kings of Europe." The revenue derived by the Crown from Ireland did not exceed three hundred thousand pounds a year. The antipathy entertained by the English towards the Irish was so bitter and unreasonable that intermarriages were prohibited, as likewise the use of the native language. It is undeniable, we learn, that in Ireland "the waters stagnate on the very highest mountains, so that even on the tops of the hills is found land soaked in water, producing in greater abundance than any other grass and wild sorrel. In descending the hills on his return to the ship, his highness passed near some cabins which served to shelter poor people, the native rustics of Ireland, who have no place to rest upon but the bare earth; and, having caused them to be reconnoitred for curiosity, he discovered that within they lived like wild beasts."

Although travelling in the strictest incognito, the unfortunate prince was never suffered to pass through the smallest town that boasted of a municipality without being worried with speeches of congratulation, and all manner of civic pomposity. On landing at Plymouth he was not only encountered by the mayor and aldermen "in their habits of ceremony," but had besides to walk between a double line of soldiers "under arms, with colours flying, trumpets sounding, and drums beating," while the sailors on the numerous ships in the harbour manned the yards, and the people filled the streets and mounted to the very roofs of the houses. Such a rare sight in those days was a foreign prince on his travels!

Not that the lower orders of Englishmen were at all partial to foreigners. Indeed, they entertained a great prejudice and cherished a profound hatred towards all other nationalities, especially the French—Count Magalotti is our authority—"treating such as come among them with contempt and insult." The nobility, on the other hand, particularly those who had visited foreign parts, had picked up a few lessons in good breeding in their travels, and displayed "a certain degree of politeness and courtesy towards strangers." Nearly all of them spoke French and Italian, the

latter language in preference; but, do what they would, they failed altogether to shake off their characteristic stiffness and uncouthness, and were never able to "get the better of a certain natural melancholy, which had the appearance of eternally clouding their minds with unpleasant thoughts." In truth, thoughtful men had only too much reason to be grave, and even melancholy. Not only had they and their fathers passed through fearful trials, but there was the constant dread that the levity of Charles and the bigotry of his brother might again involve the nation in the horrors of a civil war. As for the people at large, they hated the French for being Roman Catholics, but still more for the sufferings they had themselves undergone, as they believed, through the sinister influence of the queen-mother, Henrietta Maria.

Within the space of a hundred years Plymouth had grown out of a poor fishing-village into one of "the best cities of England, having between twelve and fifteen thousand inhabitants," as against seventy-five thousand at the present day. Dorchester, "a simple town," seems to have been better peopled then than now. The Italian diarist puts down the population as between ten thousand and twelve thousand, whereas now it barely exceeds seven thousand five hundred. Salisbury, also, has declined from over sixteen thousand inhabitants to fourteen thousand five hundred. Cambridge, however, has risen from twelve thousand souls, including two thousand five hundred collegians, to thirty-five thousand; Ipswich from two thousand to fifty thousand seven hundred; Northampton from sixteen thousand to nearly fifty-two thousand; while Rochester has increased from between sixteen thousand and eighteen thousand to only twenty-one thousand five hundred. London and Westminster, of course, stand out conspicuous. In 1669, although these two cities covered a considerably larger area than Paris, their united population fell short of half a million, or some tens of thousands less than the French capital. It was said that six hundred thousand Englishmen slept every night in ships and boats, and this report seemed to the Italians not incredible.

Although Dorchester is described as "a simple town," the district was so much infested with robbers that his highness was escorted by a detachment of mounted militia until he was out of all danger. Near Basingstoke he was met by a troop of the royal regiment of the Earl of Oxford, the

officers of which wore a red sash with gold tassels. It was "composed of eight companies of seventy men each; they receive from the king half a ducat a day. This is paid them every two months, which being of twenty-eight days each, they have seven payments annually. In each of these companies the colonel has the privilege of keeping two places vacant, and of appropriating the emolument to himself, which amounts to more than fourteen pounds sterling every week." Compared with the salaries and allowances which were then drawn by officers of the royal household, this rate of pay must be thought considerable. The Lord Steward, for instance, at that time the Duke of Ormond, had only one hundred pounds a year "and a table." The Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Manchester, was similarly requited for his services; but the Duke of Buckingham, as Master of the Horse, had six hundred and fifty per annum, "and a table." It is written of him, "He has the management of all the king's stables and studs, and of the posts throughout the kingdom. The persons who serve in the stables, in whatever situation, are dependent upon him; in public processions he goes immediately behind the king with a led horse in his hand." The gentlemen of the bed-chamber were chosen by his majesty from among his peers, and deemed themselves fortunate in drawing salaries of one thousand pounds per annum each. "They attend in the chamber in rotation, a week at a time, sleeping all night upon a mattress." Although the Viceroy of Ireland was the highest paid officer of State, the Duke of York, as Postmaster General, held a more enviable office, for he did nothing whatever in return for his twenty thousand pounds a year, but left "the management of the business to the king's secretaries."

The population of the entire kingdom being estimated at five millions of human beings, it was judged an easy matter to raise an army of one hundred and fifty thousand men "well suited, both by their valour and discipline, to the purposes of war, both on foot and on horseback." The navy consisted of about one hundred vessels of war, belonging to the king, or the different trading companies of England. An income of two thousand pounds a year derived from land was judged a handsome fortune, but there were occasional instances of country gentlemen who were worth double that sum. The Dean of Westminster, who was also Bishop of Rochester,

received in the latter capacity only four hundred pounds per annum.

English gardens were not remarkable for their floral attractions in the reign of Charles the Second. They are described as being "usually walks of sand, made perfectly level by rolling them with a stone cylinder, through the axis of which a lever of iron is passed, whose ends being brought forward and united together in form of a triangle, serve to move it backwards or forwards; and between the walks are smooth grass-plats covered with the greenest turf, without any other ornament." Most country houses were provided with a bowling-green, a rubber at bowls being the fashionable pastime of the day. Nearly in the middle of the race-course at Newmarket there was a spot set apart for this now disused amusement, and mention is made of the king stopping and diverting himself with "seeing my Lord Blandford and my Lord Germain play at bowls." Lord John Paulet's garden, by the way, at Hinton St. George, differed from the common type in being "a meadow divided into several compartments of brick-work, which are filled with flowers."

The almost universal hour for dinner was noon. Stools were commonly used, though an armchair might be assigned to a distinguished guest. At Wilton, Lord Pembroke's country seat, an armchair was placed at the head of the table for his highness, but he insisted upon resigning it in favour of his host's unmarried daughter, "upon which the earl instantly drew forward another similar one, in which the serene prince sat, in the highest place." Hospitality was largely practised by the English nobles, and their banquets are acknowledged to have been superb, though deficient in elegance. They would last a couple of hours, or longer, and a good deal of wine was drunk, especially in toasting the ladies, who "in their turn replied in the most affable manner to the polite attentions which they had experienced." Toasts, indeed, were "considered an indispensable appendage to English entertainment." On one occasion at a splendid banquet given by the Duke of Buckingham; at which the king and the Duke of York were present, together with the ill-fated Duke of Monmouth and other notable personages; the Italian prince set the ball rolling by proposing the health of his majesty and the royal family, "which was three times followed up with loud cheers by all present. His highness, to do honour to the toast, would have given it standing, but this his

Majesty would not allow, absolutely compelling him to keep his seat." By way of acknowledgment, "the King pledged his Highness and the Serene House of Tuscany in an equal number of rounds, and at the same time accompanied this act of kindness by taking hold of his Highness's hand, which he would have kissed, but the Prince, anticipating him, with the greatest promptitude and address kissed that of his Majesty. The King, repeating his toast, wished to show the same courtesy to his Highness, but he, withdrawing his hand with the most delicate respect, would not permit it, which his Majesty perceiving, immediately kissed him on the face."

His highness, before his departure from London, had the honour of entertaining the king, his brother, his illegitimate son, and several of the nobility at supper, at which the most exquisite dishes and the rarest Italian wines taught English courtiers the difference between feeding like animals and supping like human beings. Not only so, but a knife and a fork were set before every guest, "arranged in a fanciful and elegant manner." "The supper was served up in eighty magnificent dishes; many of which were decorated with other smaller ones, filled with various delicious meats. To the service of fruit succeeded a most excellent course of confectionary, both those of Portugal and other countries famous for the choiceness of their sweetmeats, which was in all respects on a par with the supper that preceded it. But scarcely was it set upon the table, when the whole was carried off and plundered by the people who came to see the spectacle of the entertainment; nor was the presence of the King sufficient to restrain them from the pillage of these very delicate viands; much less his Majesty's soldiers, armed with carbines, who guarded the entrance of the saloon, to prevent all ingress into the inside, lest the confinement and too great heat should prove annoying; so that his Majesty, to avoid the crowd, was obliged to rise from table, and retire to his Highness's apartment."

It is not surprising, after such an exhibition of English manners, that Count Magalotti should consider his own nation as superior in refinement. He also disapproved the pastry, as being "grossly made, with a great quantity of spices, and badly baked." He remarked, too, the absence of forks, and of "vessels to supply water for the hands, which are washed in a basin full of water, that serves for all the

company; or, perhaps, at the conclusion of dinner, they dip the end of the napkin into the beaker which is set before each of the guests, filled with water, and with this they clean their teeth and wash their hands." Whence we gather that finger-glasses were unknown in Florence.

The consumption of butchers' meat was much greater in London than in Paris, either because fast-days were not much observed, or because of the voracity of the English, who eat meat in preference to aught else. Every day three thousand oxen were slaughtered in London, and large joints were served up on every table. In the northern counties the people were more saturnine and somewhat less lively than in the southern. The lower and middle classes were much addicted to snuff and tobacco, and the artisans were prone to neglect their work in order to waste their time in discussing political questions in public-houses. The common people, it is stated, lacked reverence and affection towards their sovereign, which is not inexplicable when it is remembered that that sovereign was a Charles the Second. They ventured, while smoking their pipes, to censure the king's conduct, and to regret the masterful rule of Cromwell, whose head, by the way, the count affirms was then to be seen upon a pike over Westminster Hall. He also professes to have seen on the threshold or sill of a particular window at Whitehall drops of Charles the First's blood "so deeply imprinted that they have not been able to obliterate them from the spot, though they have frequently washed it in the hope of doing so."

Whitehall had not then suffered from fire, but is described as a mean habitation for a king, being divided into two thousand halls, lodges, galleries, and chambers, so that Cromwell had no trouble in changing his bedchamber every night without the knowledge of his servants. None of the apartments had a door. Anyone whose demeanour did not betray a military profession was free to enter the king's ante-chamber, on the floor of which stood a clock which indicated the direction of the wind as well as the time of day. In the gallery formerly enriched by Cardinal Wolsey with choice paintings, were hung up some vile daubs of battle-pieces by sea and land in the reign of Henry the Eighth. The other gallery, in front of the king's ante-chamber, was devoid of ornament, but looked out upon "a beautiful meadow, laid out like a garden, planted with trees and beau-

tiful hedges of roses, and having four rows of statues in the middle, part of which are of bronze and standing, part of white marble and, for the most part, in a sitting posture." In the centre stood a structure encircled by iron rails consisting of several dials of different shapes, so that the sun's shadow, when there was any, fell upon more than one. That event, however, was of more frequent occurrence than it would now be, because the air was then "almost always clear." True, a thick cloud seemed sometimes to hang over London, but it was not "caused by corrupt vapours," being, in fact, produced by "the smoke from the mineral coal of Scotland, which issues from the chimneys, and which the coal, being an oleaginous substance, produces in great quantities." Within the precincts of the Whitehall Palace were several small courtyards or squares, in one of which was the king's bowling-green. Near at hand were the apartments of the Duchess of Richmond, the beautiful Frances Stuart, looking upon the river and the garden of statues, and close by those of the Countess of Castlemaine.

Upon the whole the Italian tourists were pleased with the English drama. The King's Theatre was nearly circular, with tiers of boxes furnished with rows of seats for the accommodation of ladies and gentlemen, who sat together promiscuously. A large space was left on the ground-floor for the less fashionable audience. The scenery was light, frequently changed, and embellished with beautiful landscapes. Before the curtain rose upon the comedy some delightful symphonies were played. The defect of the English comedy was the confusion in the plots, and the absence of unity and regularity. The actors, however, were excellent, and did their best to illustrate the playwright's delineation of the passions by appropriate action and clear enunciation.

Horse-racing was coming into vogue with the nobility, the king and court going to Newmarket to witness the pastime. At a certain point his majesty and the Duke of York, accompanied by sundry lords and gentlemen, set off after the racers with the utmost speed, and were very nearly up to them. Newmarket owed whatever celebrity it possessed to Charles the Second, having been previously known only as a market for provisions. The land was owned by Baron Arlington, who let it on a twenty-one years lease, at six shillings an acre, the rent paid half-yearly, the tenants being free to use the land for pasture, or to plough it up, or to sublet it.



Another and more barbarous amusement, dear to all classes from courtier to costermonger, was cock-fighting, concerning which no opinion is expressed in the diary. Count Magalotti, however, does not hesitate to condemn what he calls exhibitions of gladiators. In reality, the affair was not so very atrocious. A fencing-master, by way of advertising himself, would offer, for twenty or thirty Jacobuses, to fight any one with sword and shield. The weapon was blunt, and point was never given, so that no great harm was done beyond drawing a few drops of blood. The dancing-masters, or at least their pupils, were more to the taste of his highness, who went to see one of the principal dancing-schools, where married and unmarried ladies practised, "with much gracefulness and agility, various dances after the English fashion." Ladies, especially citizens' wives, were much addicted to this entertainment, and "his Highness had an opportunity of seeing several dances in the English style, exceedingly well regulated, and executed in the smartest and genteelst manner by very young ladies, whose beauty and gracefulness were shown off to perfection by this exercise."

Prisoners had the choice of two evils. They could claim to be tried by God and their country, or they could appeal to the judgment of Heaven. In the latter case death was certain, but disgrace was averted from their family, and their property was not confiscated. The appellant was laid on his back with his limbs stretched out, and a stone placed underneath him to raise his loins. He was then covered with a board loaded with heavy stones, the weight being gradually increased until death terminated his sufferings.

His highness was disappointed in seeing St. Paul's Cathedral only in ruins, as nothing had yet been done to restore the sacred edifice after the Great Fire. He visited, however, a construction of a different kind, the proportions of which appeared to him to be truly stupendous. The Sovereign man-of-war, then lying in the waters of the Medway, was the largest and most powerful ship in the navy, but was seldom sent to sea, because its bulk and weight impaired its swiftness. It was built in 1637 by Charles the First, "at an incredible expense," for not only was it one hundred and twenty paces in length, but the cabins had carved-work ceilings, richly ornamented with gold, the outside

of the stern being similarly decorated. "The height of the stern," it is written, "is quite extraordinary, and it is hung with seven magnificent lanthorns, the principal one, which is more elevated than the rest, being capable of containing six people." The Sovereign carried one hundred and six pieces of brass ordnance, and a crew of one thousand sailors.

In those days salmon were caught at low water above Rochester Bridge, but it is more important to note the number of heretical sects which scandalised the conscience of his otherwise tolerably serene highness. In addition to the Ecclesiastical Establishment, there were Puritans, Presbyterians, Atheists, Brownists, who believed in "Tom Brown," Adamites, Familists, Anabaptists, Libertines or Free Thinkers, Independents, Anti-scripturists, Millenarians, Arians, Antinomians, Arminians, Seekers or Expecters, Sabbatarians, Fanatics, Fotinians, Antitrinitarians, Deists, Tremblers or Quakers, Fifth Monarchy Men, Socinians, Latitudinarians, Origenists, Ranters or disciples of Alexander Ranta, who professed free love and nothing else, Levellers, Quintinists, who averred that the Deity takes as much pleasure in a variety of religions as a man does in a variety of dishes, Memnonists, and many others. All these sects and only one sauce! was Voltaire's sarcasm.

#### MARJORY MAY.

MARJORY MAY came tripping from town,  
Fresh as a pink in her trim white gown.  
A picture was Marjory, slim and fair,  
With her large sun-hat and her sunlit hair;  
And down the green lane where I chanced to  
stray

I met, by accident, Marjory May.

Marjory May had come out for a stroll  
Past the grey church and round by the toll,  
Perhaps by the wood and the wishing-stone,  
There was sweet Marjory tripping alone.

"May I come too? now don't say me nay."  
"Just as you please," laughed Marjory May.

So it fell out that we went on alone,  
Round by the wood and the wishing-stone;  
And there I whispered the wish of my life—  
Wished that sweet Marjory May were my wife,  
"For I love you so dear. Is it aye or nay?  
Come, answer me quickly, sweet Marjory  
May!"

Marjory stood; not a word did she speak,  
Only the red blood flushed in her cheek;  
Then she looked up with a grave, sweet smile  
(The flush dying out of her face the while),

"I like you so much, but not in that way.  
And then there is John," said Marjory May.

Years have rolled on since that fair summer's  
day,

Still I'm a bachelor, old and grey.  
Whenever I take my lonely stroll  
Round by the wood, and back by the toll,  
I pass by the house where her children play.  
For John has married sweet Marjory May.

## NARCISSUS.

## A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"NEITHER is it impertinent that this flower is said to be consecrated to the infernal deities, because men of this disposition become unprofitable to all human things."

The words, spoken in the sweet, clear voice of a woman, floated softly down the side of the valley—the spring air, warm as summer, without its languor, carrying them to the listening narcissus flowers.

The whole side of the long, low hill was covered with the yellow bells of the daffodils as they rose out of their beds of soft mosses, shaded from the heat of the sun by the delicate green foliage of the trees that fringed the upper edge of the hillside, and grew here and there in scattered, slender beauty down to the valley beneath.

There was the sound of birds singing their love-songs, the ripple of some hidden stream, the gentle rustle of the fresh new leaves overhead as they whispered to each other the stories they had heard of the glories yet to come. But the daffodils heard nothing but the low, soft voice with its touch of hidden mockery.

"Are they consecrated to the infernal deities—they who are so fair and so full of promise, fresh as spring itself?"

A second voice put the question the flowers were asking each other as they stirred restlessly among their tall straight leaves; and as the voice was mortal, like the first that had spoken, it was understood by the mortals to whom it was addressed.

It was a pretty voice, too, but there was something lacking in it that the first possessed—an indefinable something that made its sweetness, softness; its clearness, languid slowness; its well-bred repose, indifference.

When you saw the face of the girl to whom the voice belonged, you understood what it lacked.

She was standing half-way down the hillside now, the narcissus-flowers springing up all round her feet, the foliage of the slender larch against which she was leaning casting flickering shadows upon her beautiful face. She was looking with a slightly puzzled expression, though she was smiling too, down into the face of a young man who lay on the fern-mosses a few yards from her.

There had been a listless, languid air of perfect contentment in the man's attitude;

an indolent satisfaction in things as they were; that the half-sleepy eyes showed was a habit of thought, at least, customary to him, though at times those same eyes could flash with earth's most generous enthusiasms, and grow earnest and true with the best human ambitions.

As the first girl spoke now, he made a little restless movement, as though her words had touched some hidden thought.

"Is it true, Maurice?" asked the second girl again, as an almost imperceptible pause followed her question. "Is it true that they are dedicated to such sad gods? You know everything. Tell me why."

There was no mistaking the perfect confidence in her voice, nor the genuine admiration in her beautiful eyes as she waited his answer. A man could scarcely excite such feelings in a young and beautiful woman and remain unmoved. Certainly not Maurice Landon, even though he might have suspected that any other man, put in the same position towards her as he was, could have roused the same feelings. Yet, as he sat up, and with a restless movement passed his hand over a cluster of daffodils, the troubled self-questioning that had so suddenly disturbed the lazy content of his eyes grew deeper.

"Ask Miss Marlow, Belle," he said gently, without looking up at her. "It is she who knows everything, not I. How does the quotation go on, Miss Marlow?"

Standing at the other side of the tree was the other girl, her tall slight figure held with a certain graceful erectness that seemed to give it some subtle connection with the young larches and pines round her.

She started and flushed hotly as the young man suddenly addressed her; but she answered steadily in the same clear, sweet voice as before:

"Whatsoever produceth no fruit of itself, but passeth and vanisheth as if it had never been—like the way of a ship in the sea—that the ancients were wont to dedicate to the ghosts and powers below."

She did not look at the other two as she spoke, but stood with her eyes bent down on the handful of daffodils she was loosely holding in her fingers.

There was a silence.

The girl called Belle looked half-enquiringly, half wonderingly at the daffodils as they stirred softly in the breeze, trying to see more clearly the connection between the pretty narcissus-flowers and the gloomy gods.

Maurice Landon looked at them too, but the shadow in his eyes had grown so deep that it seemed as if in the yellow flowers he saw the hem of the dark queen's garments.

Belle was the first to break the silence. She laughed lightly, dismissing the thought with a little gesture of amused disdain.

"I am very glad that I don't know as much as you two," she said. "It would make me quite gloomy, if I saw connections between everything and those ugly old stories which used to make me so miserable at school. You and Grace are always talking of sad things. I am sure I don't know why you should. It is only the poor, and the unhappy, and the ugly who ought to be dismal, and yet you two never begin a conversation without, after a little, making me feel as if one of those sudden mists we have in these parts had been gradually rising. You don't notice them till you suddenly feel chilled all over. I shall not stay and be made miserable. You are so terribly earnest. I shall go and gather the daffodils. It is nearly five already, and we have not begun to fill our baskets yet."

She caught up a large one that was lying on the moss, and with a smiling nod to her companions, moved away down the hillside, turning once or twice a mischievous, laughing face in their direction.

Maurice Landon had risen to his feet as she took up her basket, and he and Grace stood silently watching the beautiful lithe figure as it moved among the trees.

"You never told me last season, when you used to talk so much of your old home, that you had anything so beautiful as that so near you."

Grace spoke with a curious abruptness, withdrawing her eyes from the retreating figure and fixing them on the young man.

His face reddened hotly, and there was a confused look in his eyes.

"No; I did not, at first, because she seemed to have grown up as part of my own life. Almost the first thing I began to think seriously about was how to take care of her, she having no brothers of her own, and so when I talked of my life at home, I included her too. Afterwards——"

He stopped suddenly, and looked away.

She did not press for the end of the sentence. Perhaps it had not satisfied her any more than it had him. For a moment her eyes grew dark as Persephone's own, when the light of earth was first shut out

from their sight. Then into their fear and pain stole a curious light. It did not make it easier for the young man to face them. It was so different to the old glad look that he used to watch and wait for last year in London, when the acquaintance, commenced in a ball-room, had deepened by constant meetings during the season, into—friendship! He had called it so at first. Now?

He glanced down the hillside to the valley below, where Belle, singing some soft song to herself, was lazily gathering the narcissus-flowers. Then his face seemed to grow sterner as it paled a little.

"Miss Marlow," he said, "you have grown very hard upon me. I told you long ago in London that you expected too much of me."

"What do you mean, Mr. Landon?" she asked, her voice a little uncertain, while the mocking questioning and doubt died out of her face. "I——"

"You are judging me, and condemning me, and finding me wanting. I know you are. You have been doing it ever since you have been down here—ever since that night when you met us for the first time together—Belle, and my mother, and myself. Once, I used to think that of all things I wished the most, it was to have you here. Now, there are times when I could almost wish you had not come."

There was a ring of bitterness in his tones that made the girl tremble and grow paler.

"I am very sorry," she began in a troubled voice. "I did not know that I was growing hard and mocking——"

"No, you are not!" he exclaimed, interrupting her with the same passionate earnestness. "You are all that is sweetest and best in a woman: all that might make a man stronger and truer and better. I sometimes think that the time I spent in London so near you was the only real part of my life. I know it was the best; a man could not be with such as you and make it otherwise——"

She put out her hand to stop him, flushing crimson.

"I did not do anything like that. I only believed in your best," she said, her lips trembling a little, but her eyes full of the glad light his words had brought there.

"Believed in my best!" he echoed slowly. "You were my best. Even when sometimes I used to pretend to laugh at you, at your earnestness and your quaint, high-

souled notions of honour, I was only growing to reverence you more. Grace! Could a woman have a better name?"

At the sound of her name, spoken for the first time by Maurice Landon, the girl moved a little away, the lingering tenderness of his voice as he spoke it making her flush and grow pale again, and then shiver from head to foot.

As the young man looked at her, gazing into her proud sweet face, troubled now with a shy shame that yet had no pain in it, a thought of what she really was, of what she might be to his life, came to him with a prophetic force.

He seemed to be standing looking at the spirit of his better self, his indolence changed into earnestness, his careless self-pleasing life into noble self-renunciation, his contented indifference to things as they were into great ambitions, striven for and accomplished.

It was only a fancy, but at that moment it was strong enough to make him forget all earthly considerations, all prudent advice of worldly advisers, all the temptings of the lower part of his humanity.

"Grace," he said in passionate pleading; "Grace!"

She turned and looked at him, while into her eyes flashed all the sweet shame and glory of her answer to his voice, all her pride and reserve vanquished by the love his appeal had forced her to acknowledge.

With an eager passion he stretched out his hands to touch hers, and then they fell again to his side, and the two stepped swiftly apart.

Belle, unnoticed by them, had gradually mounted the hill a little way above where they were standing, and now came running towards them.

"You two lazy people, you haven't helped me a bit, and now I must really go home. Mother will think I'm lost. Just look at my basket, I can hardly carry it."

She stood between them, holding in her two hands the basket full of its golden treasure. They looked at it, and tried to answer lightly. At least Maurice said something. Grace dared not trust her voice, lest it should betray the gladness which had come so suddenly into her life. All through that season in town it had been foreshadowed by his voice and his looks, his eager seeking her out from amongst the others wherever they went. That had been an earnest of the thing that one day might come; but, now that it had come, all those days of foreshadowing

seemed to fade before the glory and delight of the reality.

She scarcely dared raise her eyes to his as she bade him good-bye, it having been arranged that he should accompany Belle Calverly to carry the basket for her, and so she did not see how all the light and the passion had died out of his face, and left it careworn and remorseful.

#### CHAPTER II.

"WHATSOEVER produceth no fruit of itself but passeth and vanisheth as if it had never been——"

The hillside seemed full of voices. The narcissus-flowers rustling and whispering together, seemed to mock and reproach her with the truth of her own words as they repeated them over and over again till all the hillside murmured with their echoes:

"As if it had never been! As if it had never been!"

Grace Marlow sank down on the mosses and pressed her hands over her ears, as if to shut out the mocking sounds.

"What does it all mean?" asked the mosses, as the hot bitter tears, scorching the girl's cheeks with their shame and their pain, fell thicker and faster upon them. "What does it all mean?"

"It means," said the daffodils, "that the man who told her of his love here yesterday, and who made her betray the secret of her own, asked the other girl to be his wife last night."

"Her heart will break," said the mosses in pitying sorrow, trying to press more closely against the burning cheek of the sobbing girl.

"No; she is too strong. He was not worthy," said the narcissus-flowers again. "He has been false to himself and to her, his better life. He has been spoilt and petted, and made much of all his days by his mother and everyone around him, and Belle is but the echo of all he says and thinks. With this girl by his side, he might have risen above the life he is leading and will lead now, but he has failed. It is as if it had never been."

"May I speak to you for a moment, Miss Marlow?"

Grace had risen to her feet and was standing, her hand resting on a slender larch, her eyes fixed on the valley below, where yesterday afternoon Belle had gathered the daffodils. As the voice fell on her ears, she started, and turned white.



Then with a slight straightening of her figure, a little upraising of her head, she moved and faced him.

If he had not known that she had heard he would have known then.

There was a silence between them.

"I am not going to make any excuses. There are none." He spoke at last, for she made no effort to break the silence.

It was curious how all the clearness and strength had gone out of his voice, just as the pride and the dignity of his manhood seemed to have deserted him too. He looked like a man weary, tired, shamed, who had just come out of some great struggle—defeated.

"I could never find any. I will not now tell you what I think of myself. I could not if I would. There are no words on earth to express a hundredth part of what I feel. May I go on?"

She seemed to move her head in assent, but it might only have been the movement caused by a quicker indrawing of her breath. He took it for the former, and—his voice hoarser and slower than before—went on again:

"Yesterday, when I went home, my mother asked me when I was going to fulfil the great desire of her heart, as it had been that of my dead father's. All this," he made a gesture indicating the hillside and the valley below, "belongs to the Calverlys." That it was costing him a terrible effort to explain was seen by the flush of shame that reddened his face, but he went on steadily, apparently determined not to spare himself. "This part of their property runs straight through the middle of ours, and for generations it has been a source of trouble and vexation. The Landons and Calverlys have always wished to make some arrangement, but could never agree. The only way seemed to be to unite the two estates by a marriage, but there was never any opportunity for doing this until"—he stopped and hesitated, then went on again—"my time. I was the only son, and Belle the only child on the side of the Calverlys. We were brought up with this idea. We never thought of any other arrangement, but that we should one day marry. It was so much a matter of course, that it was not even thought necessary to have an engagement. We were both perfectly contented that it should be so, and we were fond of each other—in a way. How different to what it might be I only found last season in town."

For the first time the white calm of her face was troubled, but she made no attempt to speak, and with a heavy sigh he went on again:

"I don't know what madness possessed me then, but I think at first the very fact of holding myself so bound, made me careless. Then one day I found out what an awful mistake I had made!"

"And still you did not tell me, nor go away." Grace spoke at last in a curiously quiet voice. Then a sudden vivid consciousness of it all—of those days in London when she had learned to look so for his coming, believing him from his conduct to her to be a free man; of yesterday, when, still in that belief, she had let him see what his love was to her—came upon her, and with a faint cry of passionate shame, she hid her face in her hands.

"Grace, Grace! I loved you so—I love you so!" He took a swift step to her side. "If you could only guess what I felt all the time! I hated and despised myself, yet every day put it off, until at last I could not say anything. It is what I have done all through my life, this putting off, and it has brought me to a miserable pass now. Then I went away at last, to think it all out quietly. I loved you so dearly that I thought it could not be really right to marry another woman, even though that other was Belle. But down here, with all the old influences at work again, I began to trouble and worry about it all. I had not yet told you in plain words that I loved you, though you must have guessed it long ago. Then last week you came to the rectory, and——"

"I thought you were abroad, or else I should not have come; but my cousin begged me so hard to come and stay with her as soon as they were settled in their new home, that I came. I thought you had forgotten me, and that I had been foolish like so many other women."

"Forgotten you, Grace! I can't give you up! It is all foolishness, this fancied engagement of mine. What does it matter about the land? I would let it go a hundred times over now. It will not hurt Belle. She is one of those girls who would love anyone who is kind to her. I was mad last night, when I listened to my mother. I was so bothered and worried that when Belle came in just afterwards, I said the word that made the arrangement binding to put an end to the trouble. Grace, I don't know what possessed me. What I thought was honour was only dishonour."

There was nothing righteous or binding in the arrangement. It was only a case of pure worldly ambition." He had caught her hands in his, and at last was giving free utterance to the passion and love that had so tormented him for the last few months. "Grace, you must listen to me."

He would not yield up her hands, but held them fast locked in his, as if to compel her to listen. He would not appeal to the love she had so simply betrayed yesterday. Bad as he had been, he could not do anything so cowardly as trade on the knowledge his own miserable deceit and treachery had gained.

He was nobler at that moment than he had ever been, or would ever be again. He saw what this girl's love really was and what it might be to him, and he would have sacrificed all earthly advantages to be worthy of it—to be able to claim it as his own.

"I would have listened to you yesterday, if you had told me this. I listened and trusted too much as it was, for you betrayed me."

He would not loose her hands, and a flush of burning shame dyed her face, but she forced her lips to speak steadily, though with his eyes gazing straight into hers, with the knowledge of her confessed love between them, it was almost more than she could do.

"I have nothing more to hide from you. You learned everything, and then, knowing what it would be to me, after what you had discovered, you went away and asked another woman to be your wife. Why did you not leave me alone? at least you might have spared me that shame. For it is a shame"—he had made an effort to interrupt her passionate outbreak—"it is a shame for a girl to let a man know that she cares for him, when she can never marry him. No, never! no, never! everything is over as if it had never been. You knew all along what you know now. Whether it were honour or dishonour, you might have decided last year as well as now—yesterday afternoon, as well as the evening. I would not marry you now if you were free. You are dead to me."

"You shall not go like this, Grace," he said, drawing her closer to him, and bending down, till his face almost touched hers.

It seemed as if in another second his kisses would be on her lips.

For a moment she trembled before his strength and his passion. Then womanly

courage and dignity came to her aid, and the frightened look passed from her eyes.

"No, you will not touch me; you will not kiss me," she said steadily, looking up into his face. "If you did, the remembrance of it would go with you, and shame you through all your coming life."

He dropped her hands and let her go.

For a second she stood still, looking away from him, afraid to move because of a strange quiver that seemed to run through all the narcissus-covered hillside, as if all the world had become suddenly unstable and changing.

Then she turned, and, without another word, left him.

He might think her pitiless, hard, cruel. She only knew that one single word more would have been choked with a sob.

He stood watching her as she moved away from him, and as he looked, the full meaning of the words, "It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make an help-meet for him," came to him. He would marry Belle. She would make him a comfortable home and add to his wealth, but to be a wife, a wife in the sense that Heaven meant the word—husband and wife, two souls made perfect in one, living and loving on through all eternity—the fulfilment of that dream vanished with the figure which the trees had already shut out from his view.

So Maurice Landon, too, went his way.

Like Narcissus in the old-world myth, he had preferred to sink down by the cool fountain, contented with what he saw in its depths. The love that might have lifted him to higher things, failed to call him away, and his best self died on the day that came at last, when Belle and her lands satisfied him entirely.

## ALONG THE SILVER STREAK.

### PART VII.

It was a fortunate chance that separated the passengers of the Sea Mew, and sent some to wander along the coast while others remained on board—fortunate for me, for otherwise I should have had no opportunity of explanation with Hilda; fortunate for the rest, as not a little enhancing the pleasure of the trip. People get tired of each other even in a few days' sail; they quarrel, form cliques, set up grievances. But with fresh arrivals and temporary departures these little symptoms cease. It is pleasant to meet again, to retail little adventures afloat or ashore,

to discuss plans for the future. Stéphanie never had appreciated her Alphonse half so much as when she was separated from him by the cruel sea. And yet, in another way, there was disenchantment. With the arrival of the yacht, the Chancellor influence became paramount. Hilda resumed her place as a kind of queen-bee over the swarm. There was a whole budget of letters and telegrams for her. Mr. Wyvern and she were presently discussing business matters earnestly together. That something grave and disquieting had occurred I could see by Hilda's face, but she did not seek counsel of me.

Then our director came to the front, taking up a prominent position on the yacht's bridge, and waving his programme energetically.

"Ladies and shentlemen," he said when we assembled about him, "I propose that we should take a little historic promenade. We shall visit the battle-field of Formigny."

"Connais pas!" remarked Tom, who had picked up a little patois on the way.

Things historical had a depressing effect upon Tom, and he naturally fought against them. But the director bristled up indignantly and cried:

"Yet, sir, we hear very much of your Crécy, of your Agincourt."

"Not from me," murmured Tom, and very justly, for he was quite innocent of any such allusions.

The director went on, disregarding the interruption:

"Yes, we hear very much of the battles you win, but now I shall like to tell you a little of our battle of Formigny. Come!" Here the director dropped his sternness and assumed a wheedling manner. "We shall go to the battle-field, and I shall deliver you one little lecture upon the spot."

But people did not respond heartily to the invitation. The place was a good way off—six or seven miles—the day was hot, and the means of conveyance primitive. And Madame la Directrice secretly dissuaded us from the expedition. She had visited the place some years before, and there was really nothing to see. A little village, with its church, and a broad white road, blazing in the sunshine, with a chapel dedicated to St. Louis, dismantled at the Revolution, but restored by Louis Philippe; and above the chapel on the hill a modern monument, recording that a battle was fought here, on the 15th of April, 1450,

when the English lost heavily, and were forced to abandon Normandy, of which they had been masters since A.D. 1417. But madame had an excursion to propose that was really far more interesting—to the ancient seigneurial castle of Argouges, celebrated on account of its Fée, and distant only a short two miles along a pleasant wooded lane.

To the director's great discontent the Fée carried the day.

"And you listen to children's stories rather than the grand facts of history."

But he recovered his good temper when he saw preparations being made for carrying luncheon to the ruins; the sailors gallantly slinging hampers and baskets on their shoulders and starting off at a run towards Argouges.

"Aha, a pique nique!" he exclaimed. "Yes, that too is good. I adopt your Fée; she married the respectable Sieur Clicquot, and is again a widow."

The country lane proved cool and pleasant, with happy-looking homesteads showing here and there among the trees, and sometimes a roadside well, with a venerable-looking superstructure, the stones all covered with ferns and moss—conical structures, like Buddhist topes on a small scale, peculiar, it seems, to this part of Normandy. And presently through the thick foliage, retired and tranquil, appeared the grey old château, with its little chapel all overgrown with trees and shrubs; its placid moat, dark and still, and almost covered with weeds; the low battlemented wall with its platform for culverin or cannon; and its machicolated bastion for the harque-busemen; while above rise the gabled roofs, the mullioned windows richly carved, the corbie-stepped gable of the high tower, that is half watch-tower and half grenier. All is ruin and quiet soft decay, but wrapped up in such luxuriant verdure, that it seems as if ruin and decay brought their own consolations. But as we approached the ruined gateway, overthrown and desolate, the loud barking and baying of dogs announced that the place was not altogether deserted. One end of the building has been repaired, and is occupied by a farmer. A young woman came forward to calm the fury of the dogs, and to open the gate for us; and so we entered the court of honour, and admired the fine carved windows and doorways; the banquetting-hall, with its carved roof, where horses and cows were munching their provender.

"Yes, it is very fine to look at," admitted

the farmer's daughter, "but rather dull to live in, with the water all round and the trees, and all these great empty rooms; while there is none too much room for the family."

"And the *fée*?" asked someone. "Is the *fée* at all troublesome?"

"Oh, as for the *fée*," said the girl, laughing, "she does not concern herself with people now."

It is said that at times the *fée* may be seen flitting about the deserted rooms, and that her cry "*La Mort!*" may be heard on stormy nights.

According to the story the seigneur of Argouges was one day engaged in mortal combat with a giant and getting the worst of it, when a fairy, who was secretly enamoured of him, came to his rescue, and brought him off in safety. The knight, full of gratitude, offered heart and hand to the fairy, who joyfully consented to share his home, but on one condition inspired by a higher power than hers. The knight must never mention the word "death." A charming wife proved the fairy, and the seigneur of Argouges led a happy life with her; till one day, when they were going out together hawking or hunting, the fairy, not above human weaknesses, occupied an unconscionable time over her toilette. There was a popular saying then in use—sometimes still to be heard in the district—when anyone was slow about a business that he or she would be good to send to look for death, that being an affair that people are not supposed to want in a hurry. And the knight of Argouges unfortunately hurled this saying at his dilatory wife, who at the word "*mort!*" gave a despairing shriek and disappeared.

"All this nonsense," cried our director, "springs from the fact that the family shield bore the motto '*à la fée*,' which means '*à la foi*,'" at the same time he admitted that there was a certain interest in the story, for fairies are not common in the popular mythology of the northern nations, and when they occur, are suggestive of Celtic influences. According to an early tradition, indeed, the fairies abandoned Normandy when the Scandinavians invaded the country, gathering together at the ancient castle of Pirou, on the other side of the peninsula, whence they all took flight over the sea in the form of wild geese.

And then somebody recited another fairy tale still current in the district. This related to a *fé*, a male fairy, and these male fairies are not much relished in the popular

mythology, and are represented generally as crabbed old men. But this one perhaps is an exception. Anyhow, this fairy fell in love with a pretty peasant woman as she sat spinning in the sunshine, and paid his court to her. The young woman's husband found this out, and resolved on revenge. Dressed in his wife's garments, he seated himself at her wheel, and began to spin, having first made red-hot the baking-pan. The *fé* approached, but looked dissatisfied. "Where is the fair one of yesterday?" he asked, "who would spin, spin, spin! but twirled all the time. As for you, you turn, turn, turn; but never twirl at all." The artful peasant made some excuse for his awkwardness, when the *fé* approaching softly demanded the name of the presumed spinster. "*Moi même—* myself," replied the man, and springing up he laid the red-hot baking-pan about the fairy, who thereupon flew away howling. The *fé*, being a person of consequence in the fairy world, summoned an assemblage of fairies, showed his burns, and demanded revenge. "Who did it?" asked the others, full of indignation at their comrade's wrongs. "*Moi même*," cried the foolish fairy. And upon that he was flown upon, pinched, and kicked by all the fairies present.

"And served him quite right," pronounced Mrs. Bacon, who had no patience with people who made mischief between man and wife—nor between engaged couples neither. And here I thought that Mrs. Bacon looked rather fiercely towards me. But then Mrs. Bacon had the old-fashioned habit of always pointing a moral when possible, and on this occasion nobody took any notice of her remark, which indeed was dictated rather by hunger than ill-nature; for when the pique nique, as the director persisted in calling the meal, was served on the grass outside the moat, in the shadow of a fine old barn of solid masonry, and with an interested audience of ducks and geese and poultry of all kinds—then Mrs. Bacon became good-tempered again, and even jolly.

In the general expansion of mind caused by our *al fresco* festivities, the question was mooted. Where should we go next? Not back to Port, it was decided, but along the coast to Arromanches, a watering-place we hoped to find more lively and populous than any we had come to as yet.

It was hot when we started, with but little air stirring, and, as we reached the more open country towards the coast, we



were attacked by swarms of horse-flies. Why these tormenting creatures should have massed themselves at this particular spot it is hard to say. We soon got out of their dominions, but while we were passing they took toll most vigorously. All along the coast is a range of limestone cliffs, and the villages lie back a mile or so from their edge; villages with an entirely agricultural population, thinking as little of the sea as if they lived a hundred miles away from it.

What with the heat, and some little dust, and the flies, thirst came upon us before we were half-way to the end of our walk. We passed sundry cool and shaded houses, at each of which we cried: "Oh, if this only prove to be a café!" But no café appeared, and attempts for milk were unsuccessful. If you don't arrive at the very moment of milking in these parts, the milk is put away for butter, and must not be disturbed. The sufferings of the ancient mariner were nothing to ours. Not only had we the sea to tantalise us with notions of big drinks, but there were the cows also diffusing a milky odour in the air; and yet there was not a drop to drink. Then we came to a shady little village with an ancient church, but again no café. But there was a jovial-looking shoemaker hammering away in a little open shed, and we put the case to him, and suggested cider. The shoemaker comprehended in a moment. He had a fellow-feeling for us, being, no doubt, himself a thirsty soul.

The shoemaker ushered us into a big roomy kitchen, cool and shaded, with a look-out through the back-door into a rich garden, where the bees were murmuring, and everything was growing and ripening as fast as it could in the sunshine. And there he left us to the care of his wife, an anxious-looking woman, who wore a white conical cotton nightcap, and was sitting in the window busily sewing, with two children beside her. There was a bed in the room piled half-way to the ceiling with mattress and eider down; a clock with a huge brass pendulum; and plenty of rush-bottomed chairs. Presently the shoemaker re-appeared with a huge jug of cider, gallons of it, cool and fragrant, and with some body in it, too. Tom and I punished that cider badly, for it seemed to evaporate like water poured upon a red-hot plate. As we sat there resting, there came a gleam of happiness over the face of the anxious mother—there was a footstep on the threshold, a shadow, not an extensive one, in the doorway. The little daughter had

come home from afternoon school, and ran to kiss her mother and the rest with all the joy of one who had been long absent. And then she makes her little curtsy to strangers. With her coming all the house brightened up. The sister who was ill took a turn for the better; the little boy who was fretful just now became radiant. The mother brought out a bag of biscuits with the air of one who celebrates a fête.

"It is the *fée*," said Hilda with a kindly glance at the anxious mother, who replied with a look full of meaning, but was too quiet and shy to say anything.

Our shoemaker having taken a modest gratification for his cider, showed us a foot-path that led over the cliffs along the border of the sea to Arromanches—a narrow track used by the douaniers who keep a vigilant outlook all along the coast. We met a pair of these as we started, in their faded blue uniforms. They always go in pairs, with their chassepots over their shoulders. And here, in a little shallow dell, where a tiny brook tumbles over the cliffs, the douaniers have built a small shelter-hut, covered with turf, and undistinguishable at a little distance. This hut commands a ridge of broken, crumbling rock, that stretches from the top of the cliffs down to the sea, the one point along this coast for miles and miles where it would be possible to land anything even in the calmest weather. The cliffs are dark and gloomy in colour, of a light friable limestone which breaks off in great patches every now and then, where the cliffs are undermined by the sea.

Under these cliffs, it is said, were wrecked such vessels of the Spanish Armada as escaped the English ships of war and the terrible rocks of the Hebrides. The scene is not so grand or imposing as the jagged, splintered rocks of the northern isles; but to a sailor's eye, at least as menacing, with its sharp sunken rocks running far out to sea, and its inhospitable iron-bound coast.

Soon, however, we approached more civilised regions, a kiosk appeared on the slope of the cliff—a restaurant with an awning in front, and people taking their beer in full view of the ocean.

The gap between the two lines of cliffs is just big enough to hold the little town, with its irregular pointed roofs, its long sea-wall, and the mixture of rock and sand below. There were tents on the sands, and huge many-coloured umbrellas, and girls playing croquet on the smooth flat sand.

And then we found ourselves in the one narrow street of Arromanches.

The omnibus had just arrived loaded with our baggage, and we all met in front of the Hotel Chrétien.

And here is Mère Chrétien herself, portly, stout, and rosy, coming out to welcome us. Her house has wonderfully grown and increased of late years, and besides the pleasant old-fashioned auberge, with its balcony over the street and a pleasant nook below in its shadow, inviting pipe and glass on the hot summer afternoon, all kinds of buildings have grown up about the place, and Madame Chrétien shows with pride her long *salle à manger* that will seat a hundred and twenty guests.

"They have not all arrived as yet—oh no," says Madame Chrétien. "But some to-day and more to-morrow, and soon not a place will be vacant. And Auguste the waiter from Paris is sunning himself on the terrace looking over the sea; and the chef has just arrived by omnibus; and altogether—yes, the season has commenced—it has well commenced, and— But it is all labour and sorrow," sighs madame, dropping suddenly her song of triumph; "more work and more worry, and so on to the end."

But Arromanches pleases us; there is an atmosphere about the place that is decidedly agreeable. There is no fuss, no parade, but there is a good tone about the people who come here. Then the sands are good, and the country landwards pleasant and diversified. Altogether it is a place where one feels inclined to unpack the big valise and settle down for a while. With dinner comes twilight and a fine glow of sunset over the sea, the tide dimpling out in long lines of ripples, and a few sails touched with rosy hues shining here and there. Dark figures are out among the rocks, shrimping, while on the sands and all about, people are sitting, walking, talking, with a general cheerful buzz of life, which pretty well ceases while the world in general is dining, and which bursts forth with increased power as the evening is more advanced. Quite in the distance lies the *Sea Mew*, to be distinguished by her anchor-light; and now by an occasional sparkle in the dark waters we can make out that a boat is coming ashore. It is a long pull, and the men have to wade some distance, the tide being so low, but presently there appears the sailing-master of the yacht, who brings word that there is something wrong with one of the

engines, and that the *Sea Mew* will have to run across to Portsmouth to get the thing put right. The night is fine and the sea calm if anybody would like the run. But everybody seems quite comfortable at Arromanches, and not inclined to move. Certainly Hilda and her father have no fancy for the voyage; Miss Chancellor has resumed her interrupted flirtation with Tom; Wyvern and his sister have gone over to Bayeux for the night; the director and his wife are congratulating each other that there is no parting in prospect; and Mrs. Bacon is quite taken up with the Mère Chrétien and her cuisine. So there is no one to go on board, and the master retires with a sigh of relief, being a lover of solitude, happiest when there is not a soul on board but the crew.

When the boat has put off from shore, and we feel that we have done with the *Sea Mew* for a few days, I think that everybody is more or less relieved. Hilda is certainly more bright and joyous. She is no longer under the influence of Mr. Chancellor, and can give me a little more of her time and attention.

The evening is so pleasant that a walk is proposed along the sands, which are firm and dry. Asnelles is there in full view upon a long low promontory beyond the next range of cliffs. It seems close at hand, but perhaps it is farther than it looks; anyhow it will be an object for a walk. And we start. Hilda and I, and Miss Chancellor and Tom, along the firm yellow sands, the sea murmuring restfully in the distance.

The walk certainly proved longer than it looked; but it was not a very long one after all; and we mounted the sea-wall by a flight of steps like mariners advancing to explore a strange country.

There are three signs, says a Welsh triad, by which you may know an inhabited country: the barking of dogs, the crowing of cocks, and the cries of children. Well, all these signs were wanting at Asnelles, and so far the Welsh saying proved truthful, for certainly there were no inhabitants. Houses there were in plenty of every shape and size, mixtures of Japanese, Chinese, and Swiss in style—pretty houses and curious houses, with gardens all in trim and full of flowers; the houses all completely furnished and waiting for tenants, but not a soul to be seen. On each of these deserted houses a board was to be seen—Apply to the Hôtel de Repos. Well, we reached the Hôtel de Repos. Happy name! never was

repose more complete. The house itself seemed to sleep, with all its persiennes closed like eyelids over sleeping eyes. If there is a tide in the affairs of men that tide had not yet reached Asnelles. Arromanches was fairly afloat; but high-water was later here it seemed. Next week, perhaps, all these houses will be filled with life and animation. Bathers will be ambling over the sands, children playing, dogs barking, all the world astir. But to-day the town is like an enchanted palace buried deep in repose. The feeling grows quite uncanny as we make the circuit of the town and meet with not a soul, so that it is quite a relief at last to come upon a woman seated on the parapet of the sea-wall, with a cat in her arms, looking out to sea.

But the woman was not an inhabitant after all, but lived at the village a mile or two away, and had come down to look at her house—she had one to let if we were looking for a furnished house. But to speak accurately, the place was, after all, not quite uninhabited. Behind a sandy knoll were lying sundry fishing-boats, and two or three fishermen's cottages were in the background. And there was even a fisherman's café, where beer was to be had.

But we had no time for further investigations, for darkness was coming on, and we descended upon the sands, still with the feeling of mariners who had landed on a strange coast and found it deserted. Tom proposed to fix up the Union Jack somewhere, as first discoverers, but no one happened to have a Union Jack handy, and so the proposal fell through.

As we returned, the murmur of the sea had become louder and more ominous. According to our reckoning, the tide should hardly yet have turned; but it had not felt itself bound by our reckoning, for turned it was, and speeding in with a quiet vengeful determination. And then it had come over quite dark, and we could hardly make out where we were going, only we found that patches of sand that had been dry enough as we came, were now just covered with water. We had a quick breathless race under the cliffs that frowned over us, dark and inexorable. I supported and encouraged Hilda, while Tom did his best with Miss Chancellor. It was a near thing, for just as we reached the foot of the sea-wall, with steps leading up to safety above, a broad line of dark water came with gathered force and dashed after us. Nobody had missed us, it seemed, and it was quite strange to see everybody so

calm and unconcerned, while we had felt for a moment that the cold hand of death was plucking at us.

"Hilda," I whispered, pressing her hand, "it would not have been so bad, after all, to die with you."

Hilda looked doubtful, as if she thought it would be difficult to make drowning pleasant under any circumstances; but Miss Chancellor looked at Tom with quite a soft dewy look in her large grey eyes.

As for the dripping skirts that Justine grumbled over, they caused no remark, for dripping skirts were everywhere. They dripped on the staircases, on the landings, and you heard them pit-a-patter on the floor above your head. And with that, innumerable prints of wet feet in all the passages. For everybody was bathing with great punctuality and regularity. You met figures in white sheets with gleaming ankles at every turn.

And so for a time we followed the customs of the place. We went out shrimping in the morning when the tide served. Capital fun was this, the rocks swarming with crustaceans, of active and vigorous habits, however, that were not easy to catch. In the afternoon we bathed, walking in solemn procession from our rooms across the sea-wall and over half a mile of sand. In the evening we chatted on the terrace or took walks into the pleasant inland country. There was Ryes, a pleasant little village with a good church and an old manoir, and on the way many pleasant lanes, footpaths, and bridle-paths, with here and there glimpses of the sea through the trees, and Douvres, that was farther afield, but still accessible with Contango's help—Douvres with its fine church and some few remains of the château of the bishops of Bayeux, the two places causing mild astonishment and speculation as to the why and wherefore of a Rye and Dover on this side of the Silver Streak.

But altogether we enjoyed ourselves amazingly at quiet Arromanches, and it came with quite a shock—that letter to Hilda from Mr. Chancellor, announcing that he could manage to get away from Friday to Monday, and that he was coming across in the Sea Mew from Southampton to the port of Caen. I caught a quick glance from Hilda as she read out the news. Evidently matters were coming to a crisis now, and the future must be arranged either for good or ill.

## AN ALIBI AND ITS PRICE.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

BY THEO. GIFT.

## CHAPTER VII.

THIS, then, was the story of the accusation against Ernest Pentreath, as it reached his family through Mr. Hamilton's lips on the evening of the day after his arrest.

It was a Wednesday, and the vicar had been in town all day, for the district coroner having been notified of the death, an inquest had been opened on poor Major Hollis's body, and Mr. Hamilton had, of course, been present at it; but on this first day the jury had not been got together in time to do more than view the corpse and take the deposition of the landlady as to the circumstances of her finding it, after which the proceedings were adjourned till Friday. Having only waited till this was settled, George made haste to return to Kew, knowing well the devouring anxiety with which the news he had to bring would be awaited there.

There was one item, however, to which I have omitted to refer in the last chapter: an important one, seeing that it related to the weapon with which the murder, if murder it was, had been committed. No such weapon had been found on Captain Pentreath when he was arrested; but as an open pistol-case lay on the table with, not far from it, a pistol loaded in both barrels, and in such a position as to be within reach of Major Hollis's hand had he been standing upright, it was at least presumable that, instead of being a cowardly murder as was at first supposed, there had been a duel between the two gentlemen, and that the second pistol had been either flung away by the survivor in a fit of frenzy at the sight of his own deed, or hidden in a hasty and foolish attempt to conceal the same.

It was terrible for the poor mother to sit and listen to all this, longing the while to be with her son, to hear his own story from his own lips, and refute, if it might be, the accusation against him, yet unable to leave her couch owing to the nervous prostration which, following on that seizure of yesterday, had obliged her doctor to warn her that any fatigue or over-exertion during the next twenty-four hours would almost certainly be followed by severe illness.

"And I cannot be ill now, just when my boy is in trouble and wanting me. Oh

yes, I will keep quiet. I must not risk being ill," she said; but, all the same, quietness seemed of all things the farthest from her. She could not even lie back, but sat upright on the couch, her head and shoulders stooping forward, one hand nervously clenched round Hetty's, as though conscious of some sustaining sympathy in the warm touch of the soft young fingers, the other twisting and untwisting the fringe of the white cashmere shawl she wore round her shoulders, while she listened to the vicar's story, and tried by a thousand pitiful interruptions and questions to suggest some exculpatory point, or extract some comforting assurance with regard to the son who was both the one anxiety and idol of her life.

"I cannot understand it," she said more than once. "One might forgive their suspecting him. I suppose it is natural for people of that sort to suspect anyone who had the misfortune to be present at such a moment; but to put him in prison after they had heard his explanation, and even refuse him bail—a gentleman and a man of honour like Ernest!—it seems incredible."

"You forget the quarrel at the club just before, and the unfortunate threats Ernest used," George Hamilton answered gently. "We must not blame them for suspecting him after those. The thing is to try and prove his innocence."

Mrs. Pentreath lifted her head with a little of her wonted haughtiness.

"It ought not to need much trying to do that. What does Ernest say himself? Yes, yes" (interrupting herself), "I know what you have already told me about his only entering the house behind that horrid woman; but what took him there at all? What could have induced him to go there after the man had insulted him as he had done?"

The vicar shook his head.

"That is one of the unfortunate parts of the matter," he said, "and I wouldn't tell you, but that you must hear it later. He owns, however, that though he left the club and came down here at the urgent entreaty of his friend, he was in too excited a state to either rest or remain in the house, but went back to town by the very next train, with the intention of calling on Major Hollis, and extracting some sort of apology or retraction from him before he retired for the night."

Mrs. Pentreath wrung her hands in silent anguish. The natural question in



sequence, "And what if either were refused?" was as present to her mind in all its terrible significance as to those of the other two. Before Mr. Hamilton could even say anything in consolation, however, another thought struck her, and she interrupted him, a puzzled look on her face.

"But you said he came down 'here,' Did you mean to this house, or only to Kew? The former would be a mistake certainly, for he never came home at all that evening; and yet I can't understand his going anywhere else."

The vicar was looking puzzled too.

"Well, I certainly understood him to speak of this house; but I only saw him for a moment or two. Lorton, your old solicitor, sent me off to find that friend of his, and I also wanted to try and see the doctor before the inquest opened. I am going back now. I promised Lorton I would. There is a great deal to do, and I must get Ernest to give me every particular, but I had hoped that you would be able to show that he left here in a conciliatory spirit, and more bent on explaining matters with regard to Mrs. — than on provoking a worse quarrel. If you or Hetty could have testified to that much——"

He looked at the young girl as he spoke and stopped short, startled by the ghastly pallor of the face that met his, and which, as his eyes rested on it, was almost instantly succeeded by a burning crimson blush. Mrs. Pentreath did not notice his pause, however, her own eyes had filled with tears.

"But we can't; how can we, when he was not here, and when, if he had been, we shouldn't have known it?" she said piteously. "I was out at the Morrisons, you know; and Hetty had gone to bed hours before with a sick headache, and was fast asleep when I left; but I asked Hickson when he came for me with the carriage, if his master had returned, and he said no. I did so because Ernest had been called up to town by a telegram so early in the morning that no one but Hickson saw him before leaving, and I felt nervous lest anything should be amiss. George, will it be too late for you to see him to-night, and ask him? Pray don't delay. There is some mistake, I am sure."

For a second the vicar did not answer. He was still looking fixedly at Hetty, but after that momentary meeting of their eyes hers had drooped, and while his aunt was speaking, the colour mounted higher and higher in her face, and she turned away her

head as if unable to bear the scrutiny which, without looking up, she felt was upon her. George Hamilton averted his own eyes with a sigh, and rose up, taking his aunt's hand in a close, kindly pressure.

"Yes, there must be some mistake," he said, "but it will soon be cleared up; and you are right, I ought not to delay. Now, my dear good auntie, don't lose heart, or look so unhappy. Remember, it is far better that you should be able to say nothing about him, than one word which could be used to his detriment."

"That would not be possible, George."

"It might be if you had seen him when he was in a passion and talking foolishly. Those hasty words at the club are the chief items against him now. It is one blessing in a sad business that neither you nor I can be called upon to bear witness to any others, and we must be thankful for it."

He bent down to kiss her as he spoke, and then, with a momentary hesitation—too slight indeed to be noticed—held out his hand to his young sweetheart, who, crouched on a stool at her guardian's knee, with one trembling hand still clasping the invalid's chilly fingers, had hardly moved or spoken during the interview, and said:

"Good-bye, Hetty."

The girl started, and looked up at him piteously.

All through this long, long day of excitement and suspense, she had been conscious of one strong desire, mounting even to sickness at times, to see her lover alone and exchange a dozen words with him, if no more; and it had not been possible. On his previous visit their brief tête-à-tête had been interrupted by Mrs. Pentreath's entrance and fainting-fit, and all thought of themselves had had to be banished in solicitude for her. She had hardly been able, indeed, to show signs of recovery before the vicar had had to hurry up to town to ascertain further particulars about the affair, as to which he then knew no more than was told him by the lawyer's telegram. And now he was going away again, and Hetty had not had a word, scarcely a look, that she could call her own.

It was more than she could bear. She wanted to see him dreadfully. Not for any mere sentimental or selfish reason. Perhaps the poor child had never in her life felt more free from idea of love or love-making; but she wanted help, advice, guidance, and she had no one to give them. All day long Mrs. Pentreath had kept her at her side, and, nervous and weakened

herself, seemed to cling to the girl as a stay. She would hardly suffer her out of her sight, and during most of the time had sat holding her hand, sometimes in silence, sometimes crying the quiet, hopeless tears of later life; but oftenest talking of her son, of his merits, his weaknesses, of all he was to her, and of the wickedness of the accusations against him. Over and over again she said, "If they go on with it, if they make him out guilty, it will kill me—it is killing me now." Over and over again she appealed to Hetty for assurances that it was not likely he would be convicted, or that any proof would be brought against him beyond the fact of his presence in the house; over and over again she broke into railings against the unfortunate woman who was the cause of her trouble.

Hetty felt at times as if her brain would turn, as if she could not stand the grasp of those cold white fingers, the hard pressure of the rings against her soft flesh, the feverish, appealing eyes and mournful voice, pleading for assurances she knew not how to give.

She was agitated and unstrung, not only by the event which had crushed her companion, but by what had preceded it. She was quivering from a terrible experience, oppressed by a terrible knowledge. She knew not what to do about it; whether to give it words or hide it—as she was doing now—in her own bosom.

All the warmth and tenderness of her loving, grateful nature was strung up to intense sympathy with the woman who had been a mother to her in her orphanhood, who had protected and befriended her, and who now, broken down by sudden and unexpected affliction, clung to her as to a daughter. Yet all the while she had no sympathy for the cause of this affliction. The very thought of him made her shudder. The vision of him returning to the house, and of having to look in his face or touch his hand, sickened and revolted her. In her heart she firmly believed him to be guilty, guilty of a cowardly revengeful murder, the fit sequel to a cowardly, sensual life, and deserving of the worst punishment that the law could inflict. She did not wish that the law would inflict it, rather she prayed from the bottom of her soul that, for his mother's sake, he might escape; but her cheeks grew hot and her breath came thick and short, as she listened to that mother's encomiums on him. She almost felt as if she should suffocate when the poor woman

suffered herself, with a mother's natural injustice, to speak acrimoniously of the dead man who had dared to insult her son.

"But he was right, he did well to do so," Hetty thought with a girl's passionate disgust for things base and ignoble. "And does Mrs. Pentreath forget that he may have a mother too? George does not. I saw it in his face when she was speaking of poor Major Hollis. Oh, what would he say if he knew—I wonder if I ought to tell him—if it would do good or harm!"

The question was in her mind when the vicar rose to depart—a question mingling strangely with a memory of a dark airless closet full of old boxes and portmanteaux, whose sharp angles she could feel (though she could not see them) whenever she tried to move; of a cramped unnatural position; and a great sickening dread that she should not be able to bear it, but should scream, or faint, or do anything to betray her presence; of trying to subdue this, and hold herself more firmly pressed against the door; and of hearing through that door the sound of a man pacing to and fro in the room without, and seeming to come nearer and nearer to her hiding-place with every restless step; of—

It was all in her mind, mingling with the question, distracting it, forcing it to her lips when the vicar rose to depart; and the sense that he was indeed going, that it must remain unanswered, that she should not see him for another day, and that then it might only be in the same manner: that others might question, and she should not know how to answer, crushed her with a veritable sense of despair.

When he said "Good-bye, Hetty," in that grave, tender tone, which yet told her in some indefinable way that he was not satisfied with her, she could not even answer him for the sob which rose in her throat and choked her. She let him drop her hand and go; and then the door closed, and Mrs. Pentreath put up her hand to her head.

"My poor boy!" she said sorrowfully, "if only I could go to him instead. Hetty, do you think—"

Hetty could bear it no longer. She sprang up, pulling away her hand.

"I am going—going to ask Mr. Hamilton what time he will come for you to-morrow," she said breathlessly, and then she made her escape.

She made up her mind. She would speak to him, even if it were only for a moment.

The vicar was just letting himself out of

the front-door when he heard her utter his name, and turning, saw her hurrying down the corridor to overtake him. Her hands were outstretched, and she was gasping for breath, so that her voice was hardly audible; but he stepped back gladly, and came to meet her, taking her into his arms in a close, sheltering embrace as he said:

"My darling, this is good of you! I thought I was not to speak to you at all; and it seemed rather hard, though my poor aunt's trouble makes one ashamed to think of anything else."

"Yes, it was about—about that I came," she answered quickly, for even in her hurry and agitation she could not bear him to think her forward. It shocked her shy young maidenliness that she should seem to run after him now, often as she had done so in her more juvenile days; and yet how delicious the touch of that encircling arm was to her, and with what a strong and tender clasp it seemed to uphold her slight trembling figure. "I wanted— Will you tell me what you think about this?" she said a little breathlessly. "His mother of course believes him innocent; but you—do you think so too?"

"I wish with all my heart I did," said the vicar, "but unless he can get some witness to prove his assertion that he entered the house after the landlady, I do not see, the evidence on the other side is so terribly overwhelming, how anyone can do so. Not, of course," as he felt the girl start and shiver, "that I think for one moment it could be called murder, or that any degree of passion could have made a man of honour, like Ernest, fire unfairly; but I believe that there was a duel, and that, in his heat and excitement, he pulled the trigger too soon. The worst part of it is his denying it."

"Why? Oh, do you think——"

"I think that, as there were no witnesses, if he were to own frankly to it and give all the details of his own accord, that, though a jury would be obliged to bring in a verdict of manslaughter, they would take into consideration the intense aggravation of the insult he had received, the soldier's exaggerated sense of honour, and the other soldier's readiness to meet it; besides the fact that, though the pistol which did the deed has not yet been found, the remaining one and the case were both proved to have belonged to Major Hollis. All these things might be made to show that Ernest did not come prepared to commit the deed

with which he is charged, but was worked up to it by some repetition of the affront he had already received. To me it seems so clear that I can only hope that Ernest will be induced to drop his present story. He must see that no one believes it, and for my own part I felt only too thankful to hear his poor mother confirm what Hickson had already told me as to his not having been here that night, for if it had been so——"

"Well?" Hetty had been standing still, her hands clasped together, her face lifted to his, listening eagerly. When he paused for a second, she broke in in a quick jarring voice. "If it had been? What were you going to say? Go on, please. Do—do you mean that it would hurt him?"

The vicar looked down at her in some surprise. He could not see her face. The house was all in confusion, as houses are apt to be when the heads of them are in trouble; and Hickson had forgotten the hall gas. Only a faint red glow came through the open door of the dining-room, where a fire was burning, and touched the girl's white dress and the startled turn of her head.

"Of course it would hurt him," he answered. "Think! a journey from town and back again takes time, and so also does an altercation or argument. He would not have had enough for both. Nay, he would barely have had time enough to go to Albion Street, make his way into the house, and shoot his victim then and there if that part of his story were true."

"But—but the pistols?" She said the words almost in a whisper, as if holding on to the plea the vicar had already put forward.

"In that case he must have brought one with him, or Major Hollis might have been cleaning his when interrupted; or—— But what is the good of discussing probabilities? I don't want to believe my own cousin a liar, but for his own sake I hope no one will be able to prove the contrary unless they are also able to testify that he was in a far milder and more conciliatory mood than when he left the club; for if they couldn't do the latter they might——"

"What?"

"Hang him!" said the vicar abruptly.

Hetty started back, a low sharp cry breaking from her lips. She put up her hand as if to silence him.

"Oh, don't, don't say such things," she

stammered. "No one would. How could they? And there would be no need to ask them when Hickson and Mrs. Pentreath can both swear that he wasn't here. Why, if anything happened to Captain Pentreath it would kill his mother; she said so. But he is quite safe—quite—quite safe there."

She smiled a little as she said it, even though still shivering all over with agitation. The vicar could see the gleam of her pretty white teeth in the dim light. He did not understand this passionate emotion, this almost incoherent assertion of his cousin's safety. It recalled something else to him, and his brow darkened a little.

"I forgot to tell you," he said suddenly, "that Ernest sent his love to you."

"To me!"

"Yes. He was very angry, perhaps not unnaturally, at my not seeming to believe his story. He would hardly speak to me, indeed; but, as I went away, he called out: 'Give my love to little Hetty, and tell her not to fret for me.'"

Hetty was speechless. It seemed to her as if someone she was trying to help had dealt her a mocking blow in the face, and the blood rushed up into it in a quick tide of outraged resentment. Only a moment back she had felt sorry for this man, anxious lest she might injure him by some imprudent word; and in the midst of his own danger, in the remorse he must have been feeling for his crime, he could yet find time to insult her, and, through her, her lover, his rival.

"Oh——" she said in a shaken, gasping tone, and then stopped short.

She was afraid of herself, of what she might be tempted to say, and there was no time for explanations, for thinking what to tell and what to leave untold. At that moment Mrs. Pentreath's voice could be heard calling from the library:

"Hetty! Hetty! where are you?"

The vicar started and went to the door, holding up his watch to the moonlight.

"I must go," he said quickly. "It is later than I thought, and I may miss the train. Good-bye, Hetty!"

He put his arm round his betrothed and kissed her, but not as he had done before. In truth, he was feeling irritated and puzzled. Ernest's message, which had annoyed him at the moment, annoyed him more when he saw the disproportionate effect it produced, and, naturally, he did

not understand the latter. Things he had forgotten—the view from the choir window of those two walking side by side along the frosty road; Hetty's hurry to get rid of him a little while before; her insistence on their engagement being kept secret; and her unaccountable silence just now when she heard Mrs. Pentreath adduce what she knew to be a mistake—all these things came back to him in a rush, and he was a man who hated anything like deceit or double-dealing. As the girl put up her innocent lips to him, he held her face a little away, looking down on it in the faint white moonbeams with sudden sharpness, as he asked:

"That is all, then? You have nothing else to say, nothing else you want to tell me before I go?"

"Hetty!" Mrs. Pentreath called again, and then the library-bell rang.

Hetty pulled away her face with a quick, nervous impulse. The moonbeams made it very pale.

"I? Oh no, no, no! I must go now, and so must you. You have stayed too long already. Oh, pray don't delay," she said hurriedly, and then she wondered if she had offended him by her vehemence, and felt half-inclined to run after him and say "Good-bye" again, he was gone so quickly and without another word.

Some shadow had fallen between them at the moment of parting, and dimly she recognised that Ernest Pentreath was at the bottom of it; yet what could she have done? It would have seemed to her beyond all things petty and revengeful to choose this moment, when he was in peril of his life, and needed all the aid friends or kindred could give him, to bring forward her own small wrongs and accusations against him. What did they matter, after all? He could not hurt her now, and some day, when he was out of danger, she would tell George everything.

She closed the door softly and went back into the house, glad and thankful she had not spoken.

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1873 „ 1877 .....	68,032 .....	2,023,788
1878 „ 1882 .....	88,175 .....	2,683,111

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12	1	16	8	22	2	3	1	32	2	13	1	42	3	9	5	52	4	18	6
13	1	17	2	23	2	3	11	33	2	14	4	43	3	11	8	53	5	2	4
14	1	17	9	24	2	4	9	34	2	15	8	44	3	14	0	54	5	6	6
15	1	18	4	25	2	5	7	35	2	17	1	45	3	16	6	55	5	10	11
16	1	18	11	26	2	6	6	36	2	18	7	46	3	19	2	56	5	15	7
17	1	19	6	27	2	7	6	37	3	0	2	47	4	1	11	57	6	0	7
18	2	0	2	28	2	8	6	38	3	1	10	48	4	4	10	58	6	5	10
19	2	0	10	29	2	9	7	39	3	3	7	49	4	8	0	59	6	11	5
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